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ABSTRACT

This report describes student academic achievement assessment activities at Front Range Community College (FRCC) (Colorado). According to this plan, all major decisions within the college will be based on four strategic initiatives: quality of student experience; excellence of human resources; college flexibility and responsibility; and cutting-edge technology. For assessment purposes, FRCC identified 47 academic instructional program areas that offer certificates, degrees, transfer courses, development courses, student services, community and professional development courses, and college-wide general education. These program areas and the goals associated with each are delineated as follows: (1) career/technical education: meeting the occupational goals of youth and adults in technical and vocational careers; (2) transfer education: providing students with the academic background for successful performance at a four-year college or university; (3) basic skills education: enabling students to acquire or improve basic skills necessary to succeed in the college-level courses required for certificate or degree programs; (4) student services: facilitating student progress and success; (5) continuing education and customized training: supporting lifelong learning needs of area residents and workforce development needs of area employers; and (6) general education: providing academic and personal competencies expected of all community college graduates. The assessment techniques and methods to be used to measure the extent to which these program goals are being met are described. (JA)

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ED 452 894

Student Academic Achievement Plan:
An Assessment Plan and Program
(Revised September 2000)

Section 1.0 Front Range Community College

A bill passed by the Colorado legislature in 1967 created a State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education. In 1968, Front Range Community College (FRCC), then the North Campus of the Community College of Denver, became the first creation of that board. In its pioneer days, the college was located in temporary quarters at East 62nd Avenue and Downing Street in Denver. Affiliated campuses created in 1969 and 1970 later became Red Rocks Community College and the Community College of Denver. With changes in organization and structure, each of the campuses finally emerged as separate institutions. In honor of its special location, the North Campus changed its name to Front Range Community College in July 1983. Finally, with the passage of House Bill 1187, FRCC became autonomous on July 1, 1985.

From its earliest days, FRCC has been at the forefront of educational innovation and excellence. FRCC is the largest community college in the state, serving more students in more locations than any other community college.

Since the doors first opened to welcome nearly 2,000 students 32 years ago, more than 300,000 people have attended FRCC. These men and women are from every walk of life. While the average student is about 28 years old, many local high school graduates make the college their first choice in higher education. Other adult learners, with new career changes in mind, take advantage of more than 71 occupational and technical programs. Still others choose from the full complement of transfer courses that start them on their way to a baccalaureate or graduate-degree granting institution.

Individual and community services are also available to thousands of people who find the proximity, economy, and quality of the college to their liking. The college is dedicated to meeting the wide range of interests and needs of the people it serves, to providing a high level of service, and to being a part of its community's future.

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The Westminster Campus

The first permanent FRCC site and still the largest FRCC campus, this facility is located at the crossroads of Adams, Boulder and Jefferson counties (and the soon-to-be city and county of Broomfield) on the north side of the Denver Metro area. Westminster Campus students can choose from a wide range of technical degrees and certificates, transfer degrees, and core classes, and may take advantage of a full complement of student services. English as a Second Language and GED instruction are also offered. The expansive, three-level campus offers full physical education opportunities with a gym, workout facility and swimming pool, and boasts a full range of student activities, including student clubs, a school newspaper and an active student government. A new student union (with cafeteria) and a joint-use library shared with the city of Westminster opened during the 1997-98 school year. Other enhancements include a new Computer Commons, science and health area renovations, and renovated Student Services area.

The Larimer Campus

Education is an important priority in Larimer County. Marketing studies in the 1990s found that 42 percent of adults over age 25 in Fort Collins, for example, have at least a bachelor's degree. This commitment to education is one reason for the tremendous growth of the Larimer Campus, where FTE enrollment has more than tripled in the 12-year history of the Larimer Campus. In addition, a recent local analysis found that the Larimer Campus was the fastest-growing community college campus in Colorado.

The Larimer Campus has strong partnerships with Colorado State University and the three public school districts in the county – Park, Poudre, and Thompson. More than 275 high school students, in fact, are enrolled in technical programs at the Larimer Campus. One of the programs – hospitality – is a good example of how education can work seamlessly, thanks to strong partnerships. The program starts with high school students taking classes at FRCC and progresses to an associate degree from FRCC that can lead to several choices of major at Colorado State.

In addition to general education classes and programs, the Larimer Campus is a leader in business and industry training through its Institute for Community and Professional Development. In the past five years, the institute has been a training partner for two Colorado Business of the Year honorees, an annual award from the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

The physical appearance of the campus is changing to reflect the increased enrollment. Challenger Point, a classroom building; the Longs Peak Student Center; and Harmony Library, a joint-use partnership with the city of Fort Collins, opened in 1998. These are the first new buildings since the college's founding as the Larimer County Voc-Tech Center in 1973. The Legislature has approved initial funding for the planned renovation of Blanca Peak, the largest building on campus.

The Larimer Campus is more than its location at Harmony Road and Shields Street in Fort Collins. Classes are taught at the Remington Campus, which is old Fort Collins High School. FRCC's time there, however, may be limited, but partnership opportunities are possible as Colorado State, which owns the site, begins planning a renovation of the old high school into a visual arts center. A new

learning center in Estes Park began operation in fall 2000. Classes are scheduled for Preston Junior High School in spring 2001. Other options for learning in the community are being explored. And each semester, more faculty are orchestrating learning through the Internet. Truly, the campus strives to meet a standard of learning for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

The Boulder County Campus: Boulder

For more than 15 years FRCC has offered a variety of courses at various sites within the city of Boulder. The college initially offered its courses during the evening hours in both private and public school buildings. In 1990, FRCC leased a more permanent site on Wilderness Place that came to be known as the Boulder Valmont Campus. At this site, the college began to develop its own identity in Boulder, offering both day and evening classes. With the expanded services available at the Boulder Valmont Campus, enrollment expanded also, and the facility was full to capacity shortly after opening.

Using several need analyses, feasibility studies, enrollment reports, and a student survey, the staff made plans for improved and expanded facilities. The Valmont site was well located within the city of Boulder. However, limited parking and lack of available space for expansion provided the impetus for relocation when the lease expired in mid 1995. With a severely constricted real estate market, the effort to find a new facility in Boulder was a major undertaking that required months of searching and contract negotiations. To retain the campus's distinct identity and service capabilities, FRCC was ultimately forced to consider sites on the outskirts of Boulder. After much effort, the college secured a new facility in the Gunbarrel area of northeast Boulder at 5490 Spine Road. The facility opened for fall semester 1996 with new courses in science and fine arts. The campus received an enthusiastic reception from the Boulder community, and enrollment increased significantly.

The Boulder County Campus: Longmont

FRCC conducted classes at Longmont High School for many years before the Longmont Campus was established. The effort to establish an independent site received extensive backing from business, industry, government and community organizations. Representative of the reception in the community was this statement in a document jointly produced by the Longmont Area Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Association of Longmont. "We can think of no community endeavor in recent memory that has held greater economic opportunity for our residents and our employers than the creation of a Front Range Community College campus in Longmont" (1994 Final Report of the Labor and Training Needs Assessment).

Administrators, faculty and staff, along with community members, participated in planning the facility, its programs and its services. Once plans were established, the costs of acquiring and retrofitting the shopping mall space as a community college campus were shared by a number of community constituent groups. In 1998, due to enrollment growth, FRCC doubled its space in the center.

That same year the Longmont Area Chamber of Commerce formed a task force to seek out a possible location for a permanent campus for FRCC. The Chamber contacted approximately 20 landowners, and the Baker property at the corner of Main and Quail was selected. Forty-five acres were offered to the city, of which 25 were designated for FRCC; the new Longmont Recreation Center and the Longmont Museum and Cultural Center will be located on the remaining land.

The Brighton Center

When outlying areas of Denver began experiencing unprecedented expansion, Front Range Community College realized the need to address its access to these rapid growth areas and partnered with the Brighton community to bring a unique idea to fruition. With the input of FRCC and citizens of the Brighton community, a non-profit organization, Community Education Center, Inc. (CEC), was formed in 1997 to lease and remodel the recently vacated Adams County Justice Center. The CEC targets educational entities as tenants and is home to Front Range Community College, Brighton Charter School, Adams County Headstart, Adams County One-Stop, and Rocky Mountain SER.

In the fall of 1998, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education approved FRCC's Brighton Center, the college's fifth site. FRCC remodeled 3,280 sq. ft. to create a comfortable environment to learn and interact with students and community members. The FRCC Brighton Center offers three general use classrooms, a 22-station showcase computer lab, information and reception areas, student lounge, and faculty offices. Initial course offerings included college preparatory, computer applications, technical courses, and university transfer courses as well as non-credit courses through FRCC's Community Learning Center (CLC).

The Brighton Center opened its doors in January of 1999 bringing the community its own "hometown college." In the center's first semester, 90% of the credit students enjoyed their first ever college experience with FRCC. Non-credit courses were offered through the CLC with the popular "Sessions for Seniors" and enrolled CLC's oldest student, James, who learned computers at the age of 98.

The Center continues to evolve with the growing Brighton community offering flexible delivery in computer applications with its unique Flex-A-Courses, the introduction of a Business and Professional Center as a training partnership with the Greater Brighton Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Brighton Economic Development Corp., expanded partnerships with 27J School District, and collaborative efforts with a variety of service agencies.

Section 2.0 History of Assessment and Accountability

FRCC's initial effort in assessment was a result of a Colorado Legislative mandate. In response to HB 1187, as adopted by the Colorado General Assembly, FRCC developed a plan in 1986 for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) that defined assessment measures for accountability purposes. This early accountability plan detailed how the college would ensure students received a quality education in the following areas: vocational education; college transfer; college preparatory; continuing education and customized training; and student educational services. In subsequent years, FRCC met annual accountability requirements as established by the FRCC plan and in accordance with CCHE guidelines. The CCHE mandate for accountability was an important reporting milestone for the college.

Assessment and Accountability Chronology

In December of 1987, the Vice-President of Instruction and four college deans developed the first draft of major goals and objectives for FRCC. Upon review and approval by the College President and his executive staff, they were submitted to the college's oversight organization, the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES), for review and approval. The goals and objectives were accepted and the FRCC staff proceeded with the development of the assessment plan.

In April 1988, FRCC hosted, with CCCOES, the first statewide in-service for community college faculty and college administrators on assessment. Approximately 40 FRCC faculty and staff attended the in-service conducted by Dr. Peter Ewell from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Following the in-service, FRCC identified an accountability plan development committee comprised of faculty and administrators who began designing a college-wide assessment program which included goals, objectives, expected performance, methods of data collection, and methods for measuring improvement in student learning.

The FRCC committee began by collecting data from all divisions within the college relative to current methodology, e.g., exams and surveys used to gather data on student retention; students' own identification and stated completion of goals; after graduation performance; student and alumni satisfaction of training; and employers' satisfaction with FRCC student preparation.

The FRCC Accountability Plan Development Committee worked to develop each of the five goal areas, along with objectives. College deans, faculty, the Director for Research and Development, and the Vice-President of Instruction worked together to complete the first draft of the FRCC accountability proposal by early July, 1988. The committee reviewed the first draft and completed a self-critique. The second draft emerged as the result of that process.

Dr. Peter Ewell reviewed and critiqued the FRCC proposed plan. Based on recommendations from Dr. Ewell, the Accountability Plan Development Committee revised the plan and completed draft number three. FRCC agreed to share this draft, as a model, with the other Colorado community colleges in the system.

The draft of the FRCC accountability plan was disseminated to the entire college community for review and input. To accomplish this a college-wide "hearing" was held for students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Public/private advisory committees and the Area Advisory Council were mailed copies of the plan and asked to comment and provide feedback via a comment form during the second week of fall semester. Based on feed-back from the entire FRCC community, the accountability committee revised and finalized the FRCC Accountability Plan. Upon approval by the college president, the plan was submitted to the appropriate official at CCCOES on September 20, 1988, for submission to CCHE as part of the Colorado Community College System overall accountability proposal. FRCC implemented the accountability plan in January 1989.

Each year, the Vice President for Instruction was responsible for compiling an annual report on the accomplishments of goals and objectives in the framework of the CCHE accountability guidelines. The report was disseminated to the FRCC community, including CCHE, CCCOES, FRCC students, staff, faculty, public/private sector advisory committees, Area Advisory Council, administration, and other entities as defined by the President.

In August, 1993, a new president, Dr. Tom Gonzales, assumed the leadership of the college. Approximately one year after his arrival, he hired a new management team including Dr. C. Michele Haney, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services; Dr. Eric Reno, Vice President of Larimer Campus Operations; Robert Rizzuto, Vice President of Finance and Administration; and John Chin, Special Assistant to the President. Dr. Gonzales directed his new management team to review all college operations and develop strategies to create a "high-performance" organization. President Gonzales also initiated a strategic planning process under the direction of consultant Derek Mills.

Through an exhaustive collaborative process which included faculty, administrators, staff, students and community members, the college created new vision and mission statements. In addition to these statements, the process also identified and developed the core values (students, learning, community, diversity, and planning) of the institution. Specific initiatives and processes were subsequently developed in alignment with the vision, mission and values.

Two salient assessment-related initiatives which Dr. Gonzales mandated in 1994 were Student Success and Enrollment Management.

The Student Success Initiative, under the auspices of a Student Success Council made up of faculty, administrators, and staff, had two major outcomes. First, the Student Success initiative laid the foundation for a more student success oriented community college in which all faculty, staff, and students had a clear sense of personal responsibility and strategies for fostering student success, resulting ultimately in more successful students (both in numbers and degree of success). Second, the initiative drove new formalized and consistent student success processes which provided an improved basis for evaluation, planning, and resource development.

Enrollment Management, as defined by a committee charged by Dr. Gonzales, was a process of planning and delivering college functions to achieve specific levels of student enrollment, persistence and success. The process of enrollment management was described in an Enrollment Management Plan

which: 1) specified short- and long-term student enrollment, persistence and success objectives and the rationale for those objectives (objectives); 2) explai[illegible]how achievement of the objectives would be measured and illustrated (measurement); 3) identified existing and proposed college functions and initiatives which directly affected student enrollment, persistence, and success (functions); 4) described existing and proposed delivery system elements for each function which are expected to have a particular positive effect on student enrollment, persistence and success (delivery systems); 5) showed the integration and coordination of functions and delivery systems on and between campuses as appropriate for increased effectiveness and consistency (coordination); 6) explained how effectiveness of the functions and delivery systems would be analyzed relative to achievement of the enrollment management objectives, and how the plan itself would be continuously assessed (evaluation); 7) resulted in recommendations to be considered during program and service reviews (recommendations); 8) advocated for institutional resources for effective enrollment management functions and initiatives (resources).

Also, in mid-1994, Dr. C. Michele Haney, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, began the process of designing a new comprehensive institutional assessment plan in accordance with the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools mandate. She charged Ron Young, Associate Dean of Instruction, and John Chin, Special Assistant to the President, to lead an institution-wide collaborative design and development process for this plan. The new FRCC Institutional Assessment Plan was designed to incorporate a) the accountability elements required by local state agencies, b) assessment guidelines from NCA, c) the college's strategic vision, mission and initiatives, particularly Student Success and Enrollment Management, and d) the formative and summative evaluation information needed by the college for planning and decision making purposes. This plan was approved by NCA in 1996 and serves as a foundation for the revised Assessment Plan that follows.

Section 3.0 Revised Student Academic Achievement Plan

In the 1994-96 NCA Handbook of Accreditation, Chapter 14 *Special Focus: Assessing Student Academic Achievement*, page 151, delineates institutional responsibilities for Student Academic Achievement assessment: "The new revised NCA Criteria for Accreditation capture the impact of assessment of student academic achievement within the third and fourth criteria: 'The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes' and, 'The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness'." Not only must an institution have a plan and program for assessing student academic achievement but also that plan and program should be related to other institutional strategic and long-range plans and planning processes. It is important to note the third and fourth criteria also address overall institutional effectiveness, including assessment of student academic achievement. Evaluation of institutional effectiveness, like assessment of student academic achievement calls for a program that provides consistent information to assist the institution in making useful decisions about the improvement of the institution and in developing plans for that improvement.

The philosophical basis for the NCA Student Academic Achievement assessment requirement complements the assessment approach undertaken by FRCC. The new Front Range Community College Institutional Assessment Plan is predicated on the assumption the operations of the college should be aligned with the overall strategic plan. The Institutional Assessment Plan provides important data and analysis on college programs and operations which can then be used in overall college strategic planning and decision making. The institutional assessment process provides a profile on how the college, as a whole and as individual parts, is accomplishing its individual strategic endeavors and contributes to overall endeavors. In that context, the assessment plan needs to be grounded in the vision, mission and core values of the college. The vision and mission have recently undergone another iteration of review. The FY 1994-97 Strategic Plan used an earlier internally generated vision and mission. The new statements are a fine-tuning of the 1993 statements by external stakeholders. These are:

Mission Statement

We enrich lives through learning.

Purposes

1. We serve Students in **Credit Courses** which may lead to Degrees or Certificates.
2. We serve Individuals in **Non-credit Courses** for Personal/Professional Development.
3. We serve Employees of Business and Industry in **Customized Courses** for Workplace Skill Development.
4. We serve Persons in our community by **Community Enrichment** and Development.

Values

Front Range Community College expresses in all of its programs and policies a commitment to four central values.

1. **Students**: We believe that students are the essence of the institution.
2. **Learning**: We are committed to learning, both in the classroom and in our common organizational life together, so that we can improve, develop, and grow.
3. **Quality**: We value quality and excellence in all that we do.
4. **Community**: We are committed to engaging and supporting each other, our students, and our communities, both internal and external.

Strategic Initiatives

All major decisions within the college will be based on these four strategic initiatives.

1. **Quality of Student Experience**: FRCC continually strives to improve the quality of the student experience.
2. **Excellence of Human Resources**: FRCC endeavors to staff the college optimally to meet its mission and strategic initiatives.
3. **College Flexibility and Responsiveness**: Recognized for their flexibility and responsiveness, FRCC's instructional programs are market-aligned and well known in the community.
4. **Cutting-Edge Technology**: FRCC plans for, purchases, and maintains appropriate technological tools to support its education and training curriculum and delivery systems.

Institutional Assessment Organization

Under the current plan, all accountability and assessment activities, including the FRCC Institutional Assessment Plan are under the direction of Ray Boersema, Faculty Chair of Assessment, and Mark Boyko, Dean of Instructional Services, both of whom report to John Chin, the Chief Academic Officer. With their direction and guidance, the FRCC Student Academic Achievement Assessment Committee (SAAAC) was formed. This 12-member committee is comprised of faculty (8), administrators (3), and students (1). This committee provides leadership which directs and facilitates assessment, provides information which supports the assessment implementation coordinators (AICs), and provides documentation regarding assessment procedures, results, and program modifications. SAAAC also writes the annual college assessment plan.

For assessment purposes, FRCC has identified 47 academic instructional program areas which offer certificates, degrees, transfer courses, development courses, student services, community and professional development courses, and college-wide general education. These program areas are grouped as follows.

I. **Career/Technical Education**: meeting the occupational goals of youth and adults in technical and vocational careers (35 programs, 13 of which are certificate only)

II. **Transfer Education**: providing students with the academic background for successful performance at a four-year college or university (five programs)

III. **Basic Skills Education**: enabling students to acquire or improve basic skills necessary to succeed in the college-level courses required for certificate or degree programs, or to attain an acceptable level of adult literacy and competency (two programs)

IV. **Student Services**: facilitating student progress and success (three programs)

V. **Continuing Education and Customized Training**: supporting lifelong learning needs of area residents and the needs of area employers to meet current and changing work force requirements (one program)

VI. **General Education**: providing academic and personal competencies expected of all community college graduates regardless of discipline (one program)

The assessment of academic achievement within each instructional program is led by an Assessment Implementation Coordinator (AIC) whose charge is to work with the faculty, staff, and department chairs of the particular program in order to:

1. Develop a unique program assessment plan containing program objectives and assessment techniques.
2. Ensure that the assessment processes take place.
3. Collect assessment data.
4. Interpret and report the assessment data.
5. Create program modifications based on assessment practices.

Seven Goal Area Chairs (GACs) supervise and support our Assessment Implementation Coordinators (two GACs for the Career/Technical Education, one GAC for each of the other five program area groups). The Goal Area Chairs are members of the FRCC Student Academic Achievement Assessment Committee. The duties of the Goal Area Chairs are to:

- Perform as assessment leaders.
- Mentor faculty in assessment goals and procedures.
- Monitor assessment activities and plan compliance.
- Report to SAAAC, chairs and deans.

On the administrative side of our instructional activities are Faculty Department Chairs and Instructional Deans. Among their duties are those of supporting assessment activities and using assessment results. Their roles with regard to assessment are as follows.

Faculty Department Chairs

- Expect viable assessment plans.
- Support all assessment activities.
- Evaluate assessment data with AIC and appropriate faculty.

- Initiate and implement program modifications.
- Document assessment information in Instructional Master Plans, etc.

Instructional Deans

- Know the contents of each program assessment plan.
- Expect modified assessment plans.
- Support program assessment needs.
- Require program assessment results.
- Work with chairs and faculty to develop instructional improvements.

The Faculty Chair of Assessment, under the supervision of the Student Academic Achievement Assessment Committee, gives direction to all Goal Area Chairs and Assessment Implementation Coordinators, as well as assistance to Faculty Department Chairs and Instructional Deans. The Faculty Chair:

- Is thoroughly knowledgeable about NCA's assessment requirements, FRCC's Assessment Plan and timeline, and the value of the assessment process in improving the instructional services of the college.
- Supports the implementation of the college assessment plan by recruiting and training GACs and AICs.
- Researches other assessment programs through conferences and networking with assessment officers at other institutions.
- Establishes and maintains an assessment library.
- Creates and maintains a high profile for the assessment process through the scheduling of workshops and inservices, production of the TRACKS newsletter, and work with assessment personnel individually.
- Assists administrators with developing processes for linking assessment results to decision-making activities (budget needs, curriculum changes, etc.).
- Coordinates the assessment process with instructional master planning and program review processes, and with the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.
- Develops procedures for reporting assessment information, results, and consequent changes in curriculum, teaching and learning to appropriate constituencies.
- Maintains a master library of FRCC instructional program assessment plans.
- Serves as a central coordinator for day-to-day assessment work.

Institutional Assessment Plan Elements

The FRCC student academic achievement assessment plan is based on the six goal areas listed earlier in this plan. Under this revised plan, the college will continue to collect data on these elements. They are:

Goal Area 1: (Career/Technical Education) To meet the occupational goals of youth and adults in technical and vocational fields.

Career/technical education objectives are derived from four main categories. These include knowledge outcomes, skills outcomes, attitudes and values outcomes and success in subsequent endeavors outcomes. FRCC's 29 career/technical programs include the following: dental assisting, dietetic technology, medical assistant, respiratory care, emergency medical services, fitness technology, pharmacy technology, nurse aide, nursing (PN), nursing (RN), early childhood professions, interpreter preparation, accounting, business technology, management, computer information systems, legal assistant, automotive technology, machining technology, air conditioning/refrigeration, forestry/wildlife/natural resources, urban horticulture, veterinary research, welding technology, architectural technology, engineering graphics technology, multimedia technology, electronics technology, environment & safety technology, automotive technology, hospitality and food management, legal assistant, machine technology, manufacturing processing technology. Each of these programs has an advisory committee composed of faculty and community experts in the field who continually assist by giving the college advice and direction. In addition, each program has an assigned Goal Area Chair and Assessment Implementation Coordinator (see responsibilities earlier in this document) to assist with assessment activities and planning.

Goal Area II (Transfer Education) To provide students with the academic background for successful performance at a four-year college or university.

All students who complete transfer programs at FRCC (Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degrees) must complete 60 semester hours that include a block of approved courses that are included in the "Core Transfer Program." These courses are designed and agreed upon by two- and four-year schools to transfer to Colorado's public four-year colleges and universities. Students may choose to complete only this block before transfer, or to complete this block as part of the two-year Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree program. The Core Transfer Program requires completion of 33 or 34 semester hours of specified courses, depending on the Core option the students completes (Arts or Science), as outlined in the FRCC catalogue. In addition, each transfer program has an assigned Goal Area Chair and Assessment Implementation Coordinator (see responsibilities earlier in this document) to assist with assessment activities and planning.

Goal Area III (Basic Skills) To enable students to acquire or improve the basic skills necessary to succeed in the college level courses required for certificate/degree programs or to attain an acceptable level of adult literacy and competency through coursework in the ESL, G.E.D. and remedial programs.

The objectives for the developmental studies program refer to improvement or gain in the area of basic skills. Basic skills is here identified as language study (grammar and composition), reading, study skills, English-as-a second-language, and mathematics. These skills are addressed (at varying levels) in both developmental/remedial coursework At Front Range Community College, developmental and remedial programs overlap non-developmental instructional activities. For example, any given developmental course may contain college prep students, remedial students and students who wish only personal enrichment. ESL students who are classified as remedial in the language area may

move into a developmental course (with college prep students) to gain more advanced language skills. It is axiomatic, then, that all developmental/ remedial sequences of study must be tailored to each student's needs and goals. In addition, basic skills programs have an assigned Goal Area Chair and Assessment Implementation Coordinator (see responsibilities earlier in this document) to assist with assessment activities and planning.

Goal Area IV (Student Services; i.e., Admissions and Counseling, Financial Aid, Student Activities, Library and Media, Learning Development Services, Assessment and Supplemental Services, Records, and Business Services) To facilitate student progress and success at Front Range Community College.

Student Services assists students and potential students on a voluntary basis. However, all students use certain services such as records, assessment, etc. Students use other services based on level of awareness and degree of satisfaction with the services. Students are also referred to Educational Services by College staff and faculty. In addition, student services has an assigned Goal Area Chair and Assessment Implementation Coordinator (see responsibilities earlier in this document) to assist with assessment activities and planning.

Goal Area V (Continuing Education and Customized Training) To support lifelong learning needs of area residents and the needs of area employers to meet current and changing work force requirements.

Continuing Education, customized training projects and services encompass a considerable range of topics, delivery methods and learning objectives. Grading or assessment of student performance typically is not applied in the field of non-credit continuing education because of participant preference for a less formal learning setting. In some particular programs, testing may be conducted strictly to provide the learner a personal measure of progress. In classes where the learner needs a formal record for licensing requirements, reimbursement or other reasons, attendance is usually the sole measure applied for award of a certificate. The standard of assessment/accountability for these classes emphasizes the learner's evaluation of instruction received in context with 1) the instructor's competency in meeting objectives for the class as described in the program description 2) the learner's satisfaction with the program according to their own expectations and experience with the class.

In the field of customized training and services (non-credit) the consistent standards that can be applied to the diversity of all projects is again that of the student's evaluation of instructional performance. The response of the organization to those ratings as well as to whether contract terms or proposal agreements have been fulfilled should be identified for accountability subject to the organization's willingness to respond. Organizations may employ their own evaluation of projects delivered from external sources but will not necessarily release such information formally to the contractor. In these projects, pre and post testing, skill demonstration or other learner evaluation criteria may be built into the contract. In addition, continuing education and customized training has an assigned Goal Area Chair and Assessment Implementation Coordinator (see responsibilities earlier in this document) to assist with assessment activities and planning.

Goal Area VI (General Education) To provide academic and personal competencies expected

of all community college graduates, regardless of discipline.

Besides SAAAC, the General Education Subcommittee was formed and has become the principal director of general education assessment. Working with all faculty, the subcommittee is responsible for delineating and monitoring FRCC's general education goals/objectives and assessment measures to ensure all FRCC graduates have attained mastery in seven defined areas of general education.

These seven areas of mastery by associate degree graduates for general education and implementation dates for each follows.

VI-1 Communication (1999-2000)
VI-2 Critical Thinking (1999-2000)
VI-3 Mathematical Concepts and Application (2000-2001)
VI-4 Scientific Inquiry and Methodology (2000-2001)
VI-5 Computer and Technological Literacy (2001-2002)
VI-6 Historical and Social Perspectives (2001-2002)
VI-7 Society and the Individual (2002-2003)

Student Academic Achievement Assessment Techniques and Methods

FRCC utilizes three sets of achievement methods/techniques to assess student academic achievement: Direct, Indirect, and Limited. Following is the detailed list of these techniques and methods. Faculty must choose assessment techniques and methods from this published list when planning and reporting assessment activities.

Direct Measures of Student Learning

- Entrance (pre) and exit (post) tests (course-specific and program-specific)
- Placement tests
- Portfolios
- Capstone Experiences (e.g., course, thesis, field project)
- Respected Standardized tests and internally/externally-designed comprehensive (written and oral) exit tests and examinations
- Graduate Thesis (multiple reviewers)
- Oral defense of graduate thesis or project (multiple reviewers)
- Required oral presentations (multiple raters)
- National tests and examinations
- Performance on licensure, certification, or professional exams
- Essay questions (blind scored by multiple faculty)
- Required papers and research projects (multiple reviewers)
- Internal and external juried review of comprehensive graduate projects
- Externally reviewed exhibits and performances
- External evaluation of internship performance

Indirect Measures of Student Learning

- Exit interviews of graduates and focus groups
- Surveys of alumni, employers, and students
- Retention, persistence, graduation, and transfer rates and studies
- Length of time to degree (years/hours to completion)
- Grade distributions
- SAT/ACT scores
- Course enrollments and profiles
- Job placement data

Limited Measures Of Student Learning

- Questionnaires asking students if their personal goals for course, major, or program have been met
- Instruments that collect data on indirect facts that can affect student success such as curriculum review reports or evaluation reports of program submitted by visiting committees of external peer experts (accreditation reports)
- Faculty publications and recognition
- Courses selected by majors, grades, GPAs, and Faculty Evaluation Surveys
- Faculty-student ratio
- Percentage of students who study abroad
- Enrollment trends
- Student diversity

Beginning with the Fall 2000 Faculty In-service, programs are given the updated "Profile of Assessment Measures by Instructional Program" that delineates which assessment techniques and measures they are using to assess student academic achievement. This tool is used to ensure all programs use direct measures, in addition to indirect and limited measures of student learning, when assessing student academic achievement. In addition, this profile assists instructional programs in planning future assessment activities.

Student Academic Achievement Assessment Data Collection and Reporting

FRCC has five **main** components for collecting and reporting academic achievement results.

1. Instructional Program Data
2. Survey Data
3. SIS Data
4. CAAP Data
5. Student Tracking System

Instructional Program Assessment and Data Collection/Reporting

Every spring, instructional programs submit an Assessment Plan (via an assessment booklet) for the forthcoming academic year along with an assessment "timeline" for future years. The SAAAC reviews and evaluates all assessment plans. These evaluations are forwarded to the Assessment Implementation Coordinators.

Each semester, Assessment Implementation Coordinators are responsible for ensuring assessment activities take place and data are collected and interpreted. Assessment Implementation Coordinators, in concert with Faculty Department Chairs and faculty, evaluate the assessment data gathered from assessment activities of the previous semesters and enter the information in the "Report" section of the current academic year booklet. Based on past assessment results, the Faculty Department Chairs and faculty develop a plan for program modifications and write an annual report. Assessment results and program changes are included in the annual program Instructional Master Plan. As soon as possible, faculty implement the program changes as delineated in the annual report.

The Faculty Chair for Assessment, along with the SAAAC, writes the Annual Student Academic Achievement Assessment Report using information from program plans and reports. This college-wide annual report summarizes the vast array of assessment activities and outcomes: instructional program activities, goal area activities, staff development and training, and resource allocation.

In summary, a new assessment cycle begins each spring with the writing of a revised assessment plan for the next academic year and concludes in the fall, eighteen months later, with the final report on the results of that plan. The heart of the cycle takes place during the interval from February to March in which the faculty develop a plan for program modifications and annual reports are written. These cycles continue indefinitely. They have become a vital part of our instructional culture at FRCC. The results of assessment guide our decision-making and are an integral part of the Instructional Master Plan.

Survey Data

The Office of Institutional Research provides survey results data for assessment purposes. These data are from four institutional surveys: employer, graduate, alumni, and currently enrolled. Survey information provides data for several major areas: student status, employment, continuation of education, satisfaction with instruction, satisfaction with growth as a result of the education received at FRCC, and evaluation of services.

In addition, programs receive survey results from the annual vocational education follow-up survey. This survey is mandatory as part of a Community Colleges of Colorado System (CC of C, formerly Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System) report and is conducted each year from October - March. Results are typically available in April. Vocational graduates are surveyed regarding their employment status and hourly wage, whether or not they are continuing their education, whether their program of study enhanced their ability to get or keep their job, and whether their FRCC instructional program met their educational goals.

The aggregate results of this survey, by program, are typically distributed to the FRCC president, vice presidents, associate vice presidents, and deans. In addition, the results are forwarded to CC of C and are used in the FRCC Quality Indicators Report, and for numerous ad hoc data requests from instructional programs.

Faculty and administrators also gather data from ad hoc surveys or special studies, e.g. special testing, focus groups, etc.

SIS Data

Reports generated from the Student Information System (SIS) are also distributed through Institutional Research. This is the CC of C-maintained database that holds all student, course, faculty, etc., information. This information is collected and formatted in different modes depending on need, e.g. by semester, by cohort or other grouping, by period (longitudinally), etc.

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Data

Background

As part of the college's program for the assessment of student academic achievement, FRCC began to examine techniques to review student success in the mastery of general education by its associate degree graduates. The General Education Subcommittee on Assessment examined a number of key factors in the selection of an evaluation instrument or technique. These factors are included the college's specific definition of general education competencies, assessment measures adopted at other community colleges, implementation costs, impact upon students and staff, and specific implementation timelines.

After appropriate analysis, the college adopted ACT's *Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency* (CAAP) as the general education assessment instrument.

CAAP Attributes

The CAAP test is utilized by over 550 two- and four-year colleges to measure academic achievement at the end of the sophomore year in the following areas:

- Writing (Objective/Essay)
- Reading
- Mathematics
- Science Reasoning
- Critical Thinking

Colleges are able to add 10 optional questions to the scoring sheet for internal use.

Each of these areas is measured by completion of a separate 40-minute paper and pencil test administered in a standard test setting with appropriate test proctors. Administration of both the objective and essay components of the writing section adds an additional 40 minutes to the testing period. Total testing period (including the administration of only one part of the writing component) is 3 ½hours.

Upon scoring of the examination, the college receives an individual score report with normative data comparisons for each student compared to a national norm. For those students who meet or exceed the national norm on any one test, a certificate of merit is issued to the college to be presented to the student. A minimum sample of 100 students is needed to establish a base for any statistical inference activities.

Significantly, CAAP has the significant feature to compare COMPASS and ASSET scores for basic skill assessment to similar scores on CAAP and consequently measure growth in skill achievement or value added in the assessment process.

FRCC and CAAP Administration

During fall 1998 and spring 1999 semesters, selected sections of the CAAP test were administered on a voluntary basis to graduating associate degree students. During this trial period, it was determined the CAAP was an appropriate instrument for the measure of general education at the college and would be utilized for at least two years. However, due to low participation rates in the pilot as well as recommendations from ACT, CAAP testing was integrated into the graduation requirements for all associate degree recipients.

Beginning with the summer semester of 1999, all students receiving an associate degree are required to complete the CAAP as part of graduation requirements. No diploma is released until CAAP testing is completed. While a passing score is not required, it is repeatedly emphasized to students they need to give the examination their best effort. Information is sent to students that emphasizes this expectation.

Testing sessions are offered on a regular basis for student convenience. Extensive efforts to communicate the importance of this activity have been completed over the past year and are supported by college policy and assessment plans. Only students who possess a bachelor's or higher degree are exempted from the CAAP test.

It is important to note adoption of CAAP testing as a graduation requirement is a significant change in the "culture" of this college or any college that implements this type of testing. Significantly, the current publicity of the "state-wide sophomore exam" and the extensive testing occurring in the public school systems has provided an implementation impetus.

Student Tracking System

FRCC's Student Tracking System (STS) was designed by National Center of Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and became operational in the summer of 1999. NCHEMS has designed numerous student tracking systems for two- and four-year colleges and is considered an authority on building databases to support assessment, curricular planning, and enrollment management.

The STS measures student persistence, completion, and performance using a cohort methodology of longitudinal record keeping. Based upon unit record information on student characteristics, enrollment, and performance, the system provides management information to instructional programs as well as college-wide decision makers. Typical types of STS reports include: overall student flow reports, progress reports, performance reports, and specific program reports. The

Office of Institutional Research maintains the Student Tracking System and publishes all reports.

CONCLUSION

Front Range Community College has made tremendous strides in the assessment of student academic achievement over the past four years.

- Specific assessment procedures have been developed.
- Assessment teams have been formed with each team having specific assessment responsibilities assigned and monitored.
- A Faculty Chair of Assessment position has been created which oversees all assessment activities.
- Educational opportunities have been provided to all faculty to explain FRCC assessment activities as well as provide information on nation-wide assessment processes that may be incorporated into future assessment processes.
- Data collection and reporting are now routinized as both semester and annual processes that allow for program improvement toward improved student learning and documentation of student outcomes.
- Outcomes-based testing is now part of every student's graduation process.
- The assessment program at FRCC is faculty driven with administrative support. Faculty have ownership over student academic achievement assessment and work together to continually upgrade and improve upon student learning processes and outcomes.
- There is a procedure by which the assessment process is assessed. Each year, SAAAC debriefs the previous year's assessment activities to ensure all processes are working according to this plan and improve/modify those processes that require change in order to be effective.
- In addition to the formal processes of communication within the college, ideas regarding assessment goals, processes, and outcomes are communicated by monthly news notes. These include the TEAM (Transfer Education Assessment Message) and the TRACKS (a newsletter to enhance communication among faculty and administration regarding assessment of student academic achievement).
- Finally, a substantial budget is allocated each year for assessment purposes.

FRCC is proud of its current assessment activities. While we realize student academic achievement assessment is an ongoing process that continues to improve upon itself indefinitely, we believe we have created a solid assessment foundation that now allows us to accurately measure student academic achievement college and program wide.

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